

**Chamber of Commerce Housing Council:  
Housing Element Update and Workforce Housing Discussion  
MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

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**Date:** Tuesday, November 13, 2007

**Location:** Chamber of Commerce Board Room  
2020 N. Broadway, Second Floor  
7:30 am - 9:00am

**Attendees:**

Chamber of Commerce, Vince Brantley  
Chamber of Commerce Housing Council Chair, Jon Dietz  
Olson Properties, Scott Reekstin  
City of Santa Ana - Councilwoman Michele Martinez, Jay  
Trevino, Shelly Landry-Bayle, Juanita Preciado Hernandez, Fran  
Jutz, Judy Chen-Lee, Sergio Klotz, Karen Haluza, Melanie  
McCann  
The Planning Center, Mark Hoffman  
Seal's Healthcare, Alfredo Zarate  
RSCCD Trustee and Attorney, Alfredo Amezcua,  
Real Estate Agent, Molly Doughty  
Orange County Community Housing Corp., Alan Baldwin  
Kennedy Commission, Joseph Singh  
Kennedy Commission, Cesar Covarrubias  
Habitat for Humanity, Mark Korando  
Nester & Gafney, Ron Nester

**Meeting highlight:**

A presentation was made by City staff and the City housing consultant Mark Hoffman to introduce the General Plan Housing Element Update efforts and set a foundation for discussion of workforce housing in Santa Ana.

The City was encouraged to be more proactive and "blunt" in its framing of some of Santa Ana's housing characteristic such as overall density (person per area) and overcrowding, and the reality that few Santa Ana residents can afford to be homeowners.

Those in attendance were encouraged by Councilwoman Michele Martinez to talk to the appointed City Commissioners regarding housing issues and suggestions.

## **Chamber of Commerce Housing Council: Housing Element Update and Workforce Housing Discussion MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

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As poor credit is one of the barriers for perspective Santa Ana homebuyers to qualify for a new home loan, it was suggested that early education be considered. For example, teaching high school students of the value of building a credit (taking out a small loan for a car they can afford).

Housing was acknowledged an international and regional issue. It was quoted that 25% of Santa Ana residents work in Irvine, as well as 20% in Tustin and 30% in Anaheim. As Santa Ana is housing employees from these and other neighboring communities, it was suggested that leadership among the City and Chamber encourage the development of new affordable housing outside Santa Ana's borders. Past efforts to include affordable housing within Orange Park Acres area was given as an example.

The pressures on existing single family neighborhoods and the need to address overcrowding was expressed. Attention is needed to create and maintain quality environments to stabilize these neighborhood areas.

The curriculum of the new High School Inc. will provide students that are well trained for emerging business markets. If graduates are not able to find housing they can afford in Santa Ana, the City will loose these skilled potential employees and resident to other locations.

It was observed that there may be a window of opportunity for strategic development, given the "shrink back" in housing prices and construction costs to build that is likely to occur in the next 12 to 24 months. Tracking these trends and identifying possible opportunities for purchase of land and timely action was suggested.

The importance of working with the community for support of higher density sale and rental housing was expressed. Concerns still exist that the proposed new housing products will result in same issues as the multifamily developments of the 1980's.

One of the challenges to advancing the affordable housing agenda is neighborhood concerns and resistance. Prior images of "affordable" housing need to be replaced through public education. A broader understanding of the value of affordable housing to the community is also needed.

## **Chamber of Commerce Housing Council: Housing Element Update and Workforce Housing Discussion MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

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Other States, such as Minnesota, have tried extensive marketing campaigns to educate the public regarding affordable housing. These efforts (billboards, radio, etc.) are expensive and have not been as successful as hoped. To better address affordable housing needs, inclusionary housing will likely need to be mandated. Like other local communities that built a support base 5 years prior to implementing a new policy concept or vision, Santa Ana need to continue to build the support base within the community.

While there are requests to improve and/or expedite Santa Ana's development approval process, City staff explained that in many cases it is not the approval process but rather the City's policies that are the issue. For example, presently it is not legal to build housing in the downtown area (other than live/work lofts) as the City's General Plan and zoning does not allow. As proposed, the Draft Renaissance Specific Plan would change existing policies to allow a variety of residential development in the downtown area.

Solutions to workforce and affordable housing needs will require "Big Ideas". Everyone will need to contribute. Include employers as part of creating the solution – not just the City. Ultimately, the City Council will evaluate housing policy alternatives and set the City's housing policy direction. These policies need to shape into a well-articulated Vision for Santa Ana's housing future.

Incentives are also needed to promote more affordable housing. Looking closely at the needs and understanding the appropriate densities that work best to produce affordable housing was encouraged. Reference was made to local housing projects and inclusionary ordinances - the County of Orange, City of Irvine and the City of Orange – as models for Santa Ana to consider.

It was suggested that the City use redevelopment monies to allow leveraging with other funding sources like State bonds and tax credits. Advocating for the Federal government programs that can benefit the affordable housing efforts was suggested, as well as advancing more use of tax credits for entities that help to provide affordable housing.

It was suggested that a partnership with academia, such as Princeton University or UCI, be pursued to assist the City in studying and identifying solutions to Santa Ana's housing challenges.

## **Chamber of Commerce Housing Council: Housing Element Update and Workforce Housing Discussion MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

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Reference was made to the handouts on the Cal State Fullerton faculty housing project lessons learned, and the 12 years invested for it to be realized (<http://santa-ana/news/documents/UniversityGables.pdf>). Those in attendance were encouraged to attend the upcoming Employer Assisted Housing Forum to be held November 15, 2007 for further discussion of best practices and lessons learned for workforce housing initiatives.

It was suggested that the Chamber Housing Council and interested business interests meet one more time before the Santa Ana City Council Housing Element Visioning session planned for January 22, 2007.

Notes prepared by Melanie McCann, City of Santa Ana  
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